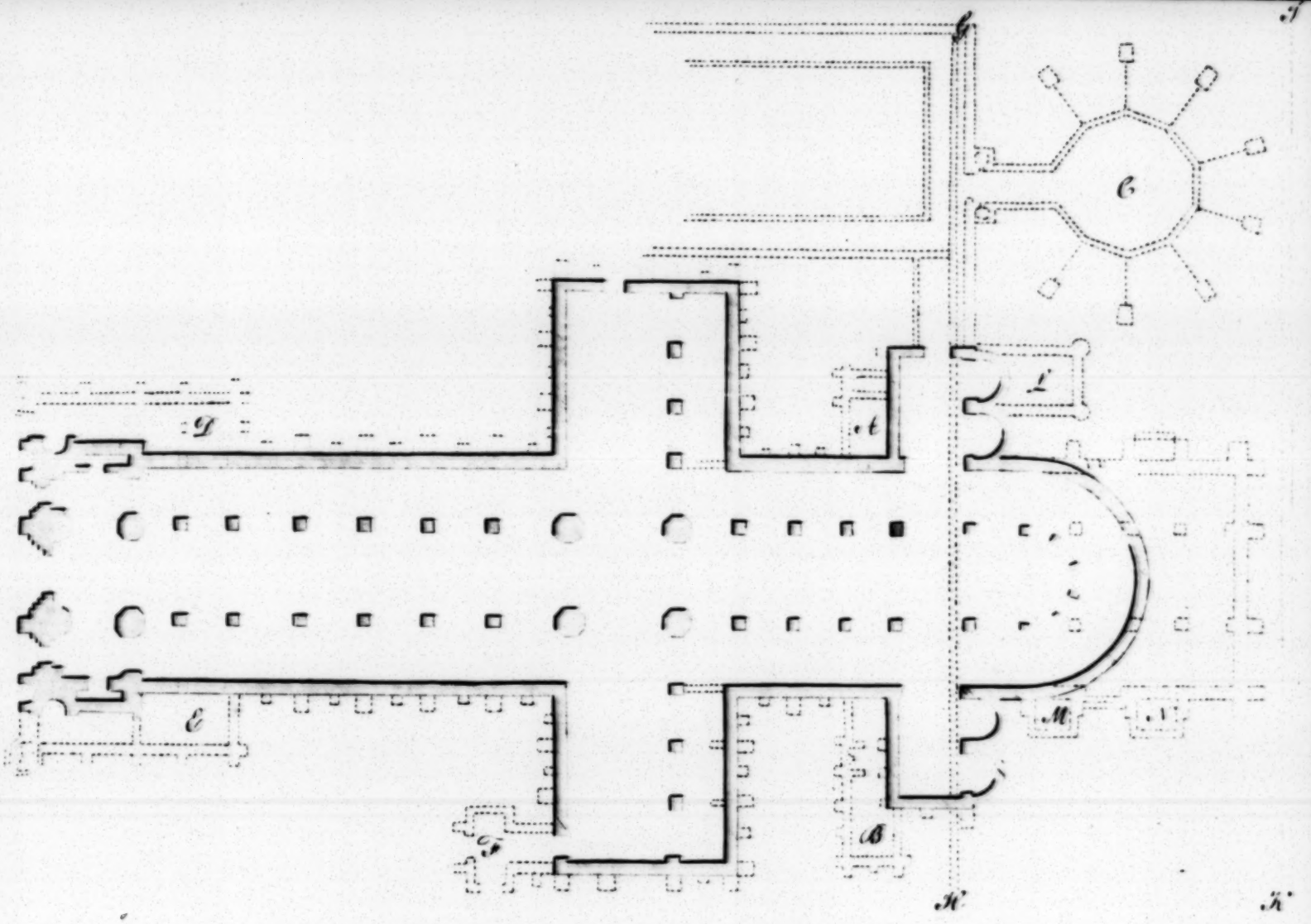

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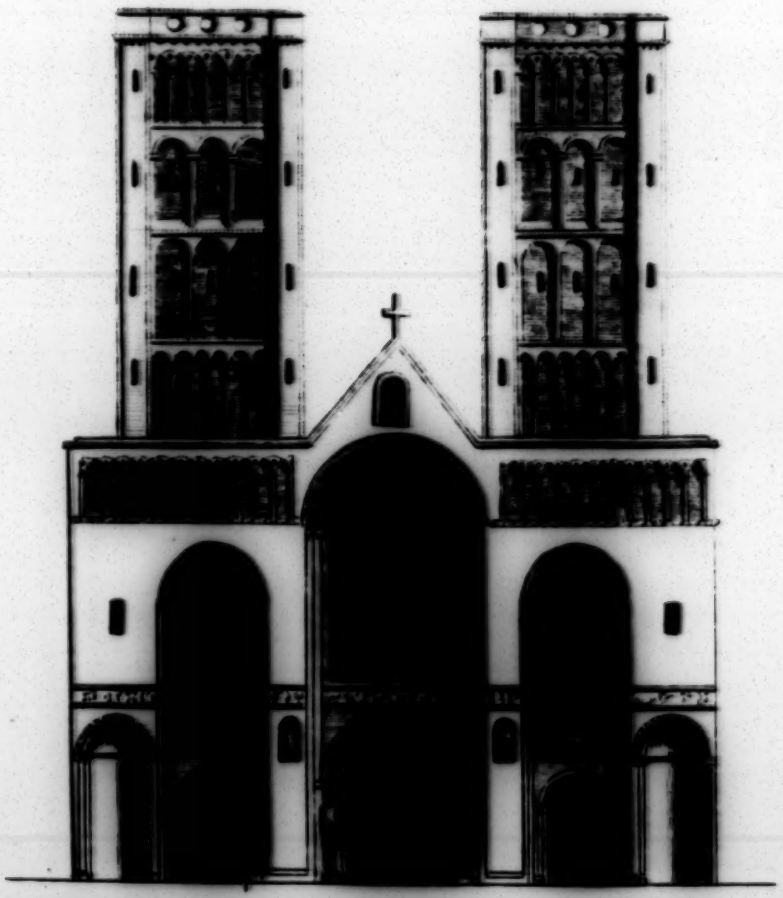

SOME

OBSERVATIONS

ON

LINCOLN CATHEDRAL.

By Mr. JAMES ESSEX, *of* Cambridge.

Read at the Society of Antiquaries, March 16, 1775.

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Some Obſervations on Lincoln *Cathedral. By Mr.* James Eſſex.

Read at the Society of Antiquaries, March 16, 1775.

IF the principles of Gothic architecture are now but little known, the various ſtyles of building, which come under the denomination of Gothic, are pretty well aſcertained; and as the firſt, if well underſtood and properly applied, would be uſeful to modern profeſſors of architecture; ſo the latter may be uſefully applied by the lovers of antiquities, to illuſtrate or correct the different hiſtorical accounts which antient writers have left us of many elegant ſtructures which once adorned this kingdom, ſome of which yet remain, to perpetuate the piety of their founders, and the magnificence of the ages in which they were built; and, notwithſtanding the ravages of time, or the depredations of rebellion and fanatic rage, ſtill convey to the curious inſpector a juſt idea of the merits and abilities of that ingenious fraternity who have been long diſtinguiſhed by the name of Free-Maſons.

Of all the ancient fabrics now remaining, no one deſerves the attention of a curious enquirer more than the Cathedral of Lincoln; a building juſtly eſteemed, as one of the moſt extenſive and moſt regular of its kind in England, notwithſtanding it was erected at different periods, and has undergone various alterations ſince the firſt foundation. But as the times, in which the par-

ticular parts were built, are not well determined, I have endeavoured to trace them, by comparing the hiſtorical accounts with the fabric itſelf; and from various opportunities I have had of examining the ſeveral parts of the church, and comparing them with the plans in Sir William Dugdale's and Mr. Willis's hiſtories, I have been able to delineate one which will give a perfect idea of the original form and extent of this Cathedral, and explain the ſeveral alterations and additions that have been made to it at different times. I have likewiſe made a ſmall ſketch of the weſt front diveſted of the parts which have been added, and have reſtored thoſe which have been altered; which will give a tolerable idea of that front as it was left by the firſt builders. The plan of the firſt church is repreſented as perfect, the alterations and additions are expreſt by dotted lines, and the ſeveral parts are marked by letters which will be referred to in tracing the order in which they were made.

Remigius, the laſt biſhop of Dorcheſter, and firſt of Lincoln, laid the foundations of his Cathedral in the year of our Lord 1088, the ſecond of William Rufus; and it is probable, he, being a Norman, employed Norman maſons to ſuperintend the building: he covered-in the eaſtern part of it, though he could not compleat the whole before his death, which happened in the year 1092, four years after he had laid the foundations, and was buried in the upper north tranſept.

Robert Bloet, Chancellor to William Rufus, ſucceeded Remigius in the year 1092. He finiſhed the church, and dedicated it to the Bleſſed Virgin Mary. He was biſhop of this ſee thirty-one years, died in the year 1123, and was buried in the upper tranſept near his predeceſſor.

In the annexed plate is the plan of the church, which Remigius began, and Bloet finiſhed. It was built in the form of a double

a double croſs, according to the faſhion of thoſe times. At the weſt end there were two towers, and another upon the interſection of the nave and great tranſept; the firſt are yet remaining, the other was taken down when the preſent rood tower was built. In the weſt front there were three gates which opened into the nave and ſide ailes, over which there were three large windows, which gave light to the nave and ailes. Between the weſt end and the great tranſept, there were eight arches on each ſide, ſupported by piers or pillars; above the arches, which were ſemicircular, was a tier of windows, with the ſame ſort of arches; within the thickneſs of the wall, above the arches, was a paſſage for a way to the windows round the church, and a communication between the rood tower and thoſe at the weſt end: on the eaſt ſide of the great tranſept, there was a portico of ſix arches, three in the north and three in the ſouth arm, deſigned for chapels: between the great tranſept and the upper tranſept there were four arches on each ſide, the width of the upper tranſept included a fifth, and beyond that was another, from the eaſtern pillar of which the tribune ran in ſemicircle, with the ailes which were continued round the eaſt end. In the upper tranſept, there were four ſemicircular chapels, two in the North, and two in the South.

THE Weſt front and two towers of the old church are ſtill remaining, and include one arch on each ſide of the preſent church. The weſt doors are highly ornamented and well executed for that time; the arches are all ſemicircular, and there ſeem to have been ſtatues on each ſide the principal gate. On the outer piers there are two very large niches, with two more on the north and ſouth; theſe probably were intended for ſtatues. On the piers between the arches, there are two ſmall receſſes with figures in them. Above theſe

was a kind of broad faſcia or band carved in *ſemi relievo*, repreſenting ſeveral paſſages of ſcripture from the old teſtament. The difference of the workmanſhip, and the irregularity in which they are placed, make it probable they were brought from ſome old church, and placed in this front when it was firſt built. This front was finiſhed with a range of ſmall pillars and ſemicircular interſecting arches, and with a triangular *fronton* raiſed over the center arch. Above theſe the towers were raiſed four ſtories higher; and every ſtory ornamented with pillars and arches. From theſe remains of Remigius's church, it appears to have been a large and elegant building; but it does not appear that any part of it was vaulted, though at the time it was built it was cuſtomary to vault the ſide ailes and tribunes with ſtone, and ceile the nave with wood painted, as it is in the cathedral of Peterborough, and was in the church of Canterbury before the fire in 1174. In this ſtate Remigius's church ſtood but a few years; for in the year 1124, ſoon after the death of biſhop Bloet, it was burnt down, (according to Mr. Willis's account of the Hiſtory of Lincoln Cathedral, p. 49.), and "rebuilt by biſhop Alexander, his ſucceſſor, with "an arched roof for the prevention of the like accident; and he "gave himſelf ſo much to the adorning of his cathedral, that "he made it the moſt beautiful church in England at that "time:" but, notwithſtanding biſhop Alexander had made it the moſt elegant church in England, we find (in the ſame author, p. 49.) "that St. *Hugh Burgundus* enlarged it, by building "what is called the *New Work*. He alſo built the *Chapter-*"*houſe* with marble pillars, and laid out a great deal on his "palaces." After reading this account by Mr. Willis, it is natural to conclude, that the choir and upper tranſept which are the oldeſt parts of the church, except the weſt end, were built by

by biſhop Alexander, and that St. Hugh enlarged it by adding the five arches from thence to the eaſt end; but, when we conſider that Alexander lived in the reigns of Henry I. and Stephen, and find nothing in the choir or tranſept agreeable to the ſtyle of building uſed in thoſe times, and that the city wall which ſtood near the end of the church was not removed until fifty-ſix years after the death of St. Hugh, we muſt ſuſpect ſome miſtake in the account; and, from what may be collected from the building itſelf, the true ſtate of the affair ſeems to be as follows.

REMIGIUS's church was damaged by a fire which happened the year after biſhop Alexander was conſecrated; but it was not burnt down. This misfortune might be attributed to its not being vaulted; and, to prevent the like accident, he vaulted it with ſtone when he repaired it. Yet we muſt not ſuppoſe he vaulted it with ſtone throughout; for it was uſual at that time to vault the ailes only, leaving the roof over the nave naked or ceiled with wood. The vaulting of the ailes only was certainly an improvement to the church; and, if it did not make it *the moſt beautiful in England*, it was, as the ancient hiſtorian obſerves, *pulchrior quam in ipſa novitate ſui compareret.* But, if Alexander improved the beauty of his church, he impaired the ſtrength of it at the ſame time; for the walls, which were made to bear a roof of timber, would give way to the preſſure of a vault: and although the builders might add pillars againſt them, and to the piers of the nave, which would ſupport the ſpringers, the walls themſelves muſt be too weak, without the aſſiſtance of external buttreſſes, to ſupport the lateral preſſure of the heavy vaults then in uſe. Theſe defects in Alexander's work muſt appear in leſs than 30 or 40 years, and probably were ſo much worſe when St. Hugh became biſhop, as to determine that prelate

prelate to rebuild it in the new manner (which was introduced about that time) with vaults over the nave as well as ſide ailes; but, as the ground would not admit of any addition eaſtward, he pulled down the choir and upper tranſept, and began his new church upon the foundations of the old one, adding the buildings A and B to the weſt ſide of the tranſept. When this work was finiſhed, he began the Chapter-houſe C on the north ſide of the church; the plan is a decagon; the vault is ſupported within by a ſingle pillar, and on the outſide by arch-buttreſſes extending very near the wall of the city. The ſtyle of this building agrees with the time of Henry II. and is of the ſame age as the choir and upper tranſept; which confirms the common opinion that St. Hugh built it.

The next great work was to rebuild the remaining part of the old church as far as the weſt towers, including the great tranſept and rood tower. The ſtyle of this building agrees with the time of king John, and beginning of Henry III.; from whence I conclude, it was begun and conſiderably advanced by Hugh de Wells, and finiſhed by biſhop Groſthead, who raiſed the rood tower as high as the bottom of the upper windows. The two chapels D and E with the porch F were built, and the additions to the width and height of the weſt front were made, at the ſame time. By theſe additions the church was enlarged; and, as this new work was begun by biſhop *Hugh de Wells*, it was afterwards attributed to *St. Hugh the Burgundian*.

Biſhop Groſthead having compleated the nave and great tranſept, and carried the rood tower one order above the roof, H. Lexington his ſucceſſor applied to Henry III. for leave to remove the wall at the eaſt end [*a*], which was granted in the

[*a*] Charta Henry III. de remotione muri orientalis civitatis. Dugdale.

year

year 1256; and ſoon after they took down the ſemicircular end of St. Hugh's choir, and added the five arches beyond the upper tranſept. This I ſuppoſe was done in the latter part of Henry the Third's reign, while Richard de Graveſend and Oliver Sutton were biſhops. Theſe five arches are the moſt beautiful part of the church, and moſt perfect ſpecimen of the ſtyle of building which prevailed at that time in England. Dr. Stukeley, ſuppoſing this work much older than it is, ſays [*b*], "When "Alexander the biſhop projected a ſtructure of much larger di- "menſions, they carried the ſacred encloſure beyond the "eaſtern bounds of the city, and ſo built a new wall farther "that way, as it is now, with battlements and towers." But the ſtyle of this building ſufficiently proves, that it could be no part of Alexander's work; and the grant of Henry III. ſhews, that the boundary wall was not removed before the year 1256. This miſtake might ariſe from a charter of Henry I, to biſhop Alexander, *De porta de Eſtgate, cum terris quæ ſupra ipſam ſunt* [*c*]; but theſe grounds were not taken in before the year 1299, when biſhop Sutton obtained a charter from Edward I. to encompaſs the cloſe of the church with a wall. Here it may be proper to obſerve, that, before Remigius's church was built, the city was encloſed on the ſouth and eaſt, if not on the north and weſt ſides, with two walls; one was the old Roman wall, the other nearly parallel at ſeveral yards diſtant from it; to both walls there were gates; thoſe in the ſouth and eaſt were ſtanding not many years ago; the inner gates were like that on the north, called Newport gate, the outer gates were more modern. The church was built within the ſouth eaſt quarter

[*b*] Stukeley's Itinerarium Curioſum, I. page 83.
[*c*] Charta Henry I. De porta de Eſtgata. Dugdale's Monaſt.

of

of this city, bounded on the ſouth by the Roman wall; on the weſt by the public way running from the ſouth to the north gate; on the north by another public way running from the weſt to the eaſt gate; and on the eaſt by the wall of the outer encloſure that way. Whether the Roman wall was removed before the ground was granted to Remigius, is uncertain; but that it was removed before the church was built cannot be doubted, if that biſhop and ſeveral of his ſucceſſors were buried in the upper north tranſept, as hiſtorians relate; for the foundations which appear north and ſouth of the church ſhew the line in which it runs muſt have paſſed through that tranſept near the line G H; but the wall, which was removed in Henry the Third's time, ſtood near the line I K. The ground lying on the ſouth, between the two walls, was given to biſhop Robert de Cheſney by a charter of Henry II [*d*]: but Henry I. by a former charter gave biſhop R. Bloet leave to make a way through the city wall *ad ſua neceſſaria facienda ad domum ſuam* [*e*]; by which it is probable he began the palace which Robert Cheſne finiſhed. Within this ſpace were likewiſe included the churches of St. Michael and St. Andrew, as appears by the charter of Henry II. to biſhop Cheſne.

THE Rood tower, which biſhop Groſthead raiſed one order above the roof, remained unfiniſhed until the reign of Edward II: but, ſoon after the year 1306, biſhop John D'Alderby raiſed it to the preſent height, and finiſhed it with a lofty ſpire of timber covered with lead; and about the ſame time the weſtern towers were raiſed, and ſpires of the ſame kind added

[*d*] Charta Henry II. De foſſato & muro Ballii ad faciendam portam. Dugdale's Monaſt.

[*e*] Charta Henry I. De faciendo exitu in muro Caſtelli ſui. Ib.

to

to them, which until that time continued in the ſtate Robert Eloet had left them: but in the year 1547 the ſpire on the Rood tower fell down, which damaged the roof over the choir and deſtroyed the battlements of the tower. The roof was ſoon repaired, but the battlements were not reſtored until the year 1775.

THE ſcreen and rood loft, with the ſtalls in the choir, I imagine were made in the time of Edward II; and the ſouth end of the great tranſept, as low as the bottom of the great roſe window, in the time of Edward III.

MR. Willis ſays, the chapel of St. Mary Magdalen without the north wall of the church was built in the ſame reign by biſhop Gynewell. If he means the chapel marked (D) in the plan (oppoſite the conſiſtory court, and now uſed for the morning prayers), he muſt be miſtaken; that chapel being the ſame which was built by biſhop Groſthead: but it is probable, he rebuilt and lengthened one of the ſemicircular chapels in the upper north tranſept (L), called ſometimes St. Mary's chapel, which a few years ago was reſtored to its original form.

MR. Willis muſt be miſtaken likewiſe in ſaying that biſhop William Alnwick made the ſtately ſouth porch; for, if he means the beautiful porch on the ſouth ſide of the preſbytery, that is evidently part of the original building erected in the reign of Henry III. the two adjoining chapels M and N are more modern. One of them was built by biſhop Ruſſel in the reign of Henry VII. the other by biſhop Longland, in imitation of it in the reign of Henry VIII; or, if he means the great porch (F) adjoining to the ſouth end of the great tranſept, that is as old as the tranſept itſelf. But, as much was done in the reign of Henry VI. at the Weſt end of the church, particularly the vaulting under the ſouth and north towers, the three windows over

the weſt doors, and other ornamental work on the inſide, with the tabernacles and ſtatues over the great door on the outſide; it is probable they were done in the time of biſhop Alnwick; and, as he was buried in the middle of the nave near the weſt door, he might have made the vaulting under the ſouth tower at his own expence, which being the entrance into the ſouth aile or portico might be called the ſouth porch.

I will not in theſe remarks undertake to determine the precedency betwixt the churches of York and Lincoln; but, as the point has been long conteſted, I will give the opinion of the late lord Burlington upon the queſtion, extracted from a letter of the late Mr. Sympſon of Lincoln to Mr. Precentor Trimnel, dated July 9, 1740 [*f*].

"Be pleaſed, Sir, with my humble ſervice, to let Mr. "Willis know ſo much, that the precedency betwixt our "church and that of York may be no longer a queſtion with "him.

"I have his lordſhip's leave to ſay, that this is by far the "nobleſt Gothic ſtructure in England, and York in no degree "comparable to it. He even prefers our weſt front to any "thing of the kind in Europe; and ſays, that whoever had "the conducting of it was well acquainted with the nobleſt "buildings of Old Rome, and had united ſome of their greateſt "beauties in that one work."

Lord Burlington had a taſte for architecture, and was as capable of deciding this queſtion as any perſon; but the merit of Gothic architecture was then but little noticed, and the diſtinctions of ſtyle but little known. It was the faſhion to apply the name of Gothic to every irregular or diſproportioned

[*f*] From the Rev. Mr. Cole's MS. Collections.

building;

building; and, ſtrange as it muſt appear, the nobleſt of our old cathedrals, and other ingenious works, have been no better eſteemed than the productions of a rude people, who were ignorant of all the principles of deſigning, and the art of executing. But, under whatever denomination the conductors of theſe noble fabricks may be placed, whether we call them Goths or Free-maſons, we muſt acknowledge that the ſtyle of building which they uſed was brought to a more perfect ſyſtem by them, than the Greek or Roman has been by modern architects; and that the principles on which it was founded were unknown to the greateſt profeſſors of architecture ſince the Reformation, is evident from the attempts of Inigo Jones, Sir Chriſtopher Wren, Mr. Gibbs, Mr. Kent, and many others of inferior abilities ſince their time, who have endeavoured to imitate it without ſucceſs. But we are not to conclude, that the conductors of theſe ſtately fabricks had no principles to direct them, becauſe theſe great men did not diſcover them; for if any one, who is properly qualified, will diveſt himſelf of his prejudices in favour of the mode of building which faſhion has made agreeable, and impartially examine the merits of thoſe Gothic buildings which are perfect, he muſt acknowledge, that the ancient Free-maſons were equal to our modern architects in taſte for deſigning (agreeable to the mode of their times), and ſuperior to them in abilities to execute; that they perfectly underſtood the nature and uſe of proportions, and knew how to vary them when they wanted to produce a ſtriking effect. In the execution of their deſigns they knew how to pleaſe, by uniting neatneſs and delicacy in their work; and to ſurprize, by the artful execution of it. In ſhort, when we conſider the greatneſs of their deſigns, we muſt allow they had a taſte well adapted to the religion and genius of the age in which they lived.